

IOWA SUPREME COURT

Justices	 Matthew McDermott	 Edward Mansfield	 Thomas Waterman	 Brent Appel	 Christopher McDonald	 Susan Christensen	 Dana Oxley
Confidence Score	Strong Republican	Indeterminate	Mild Republican	Strong Democrat	Mild Republican	Mild Republican	Mild Republican
Opinion Partners				✓			
Dissenting Minority				✓	✓		✓
Determining Majority	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Lone Dissenter				✓			

SUMMARY

- ▶ Number of justices: **7 (Vacancies occurred mid-2020)**
- ▶ Number of cases: **103**
- ▶ Percentage of cases with a unanimous ruling: **68.0% (70)**
- ▶ Justice most often writing the majority opinion: **Justice Edward Mansfield (21)**
- ▶ Per curiam decisions: **13**
- ▶ Concurring opinions: **16**
- ▶ Justice with most concurring opinions: **Justice Brent Appel (13)**
- ▶ Dissenting opinions: **38**
- ▶ Justice with most dissenting opinions: **Justice Brent Appel (20)**

COURT CONTENTION

Opinion partners

In 2020 the Iowa Supreme Court decided 10 cases 5-2. In five of those cases, Justices Appel and Wiggins were opinion partners. In our *Ballotpedia Courts: State Partisanship* study, Justice Appel recorded a Strong Democratic Confidence Score. Justice Wiggins retired in February of 2020, so he did not record a Confidence Score in our study.

Dissenting minority

In 2020 the Iowa Supreme Court decided five cases 4-3. Justices Appel, McDonald, and Oxley allied in the minority in two cases, which was more than any other three justices on the court. Justices Appel and Oxley allied in the minority three times. In our *Ballotpedia Courts: State Partisanship* study, Justice Appel recorded a Strong Democratic Confidence Score and Justices McDonald and Oxley recorded Mild Republican Confidence Scores.

Determining majority

In 2020 Justices Christensen, Mansfield, McDermott, and Waterman were in the majority in two of the split decisions before the Iowa Supreme Court. In our *Ballotpedia Courts: State Partisanship* study, Justices Christensen and Waterman recorded Mild Republican Confidence Scores, Justice Mansfield recorded an Indeterminate Confidence Score, and Justice McDermott recorded a Strong Republican Confidence Score.

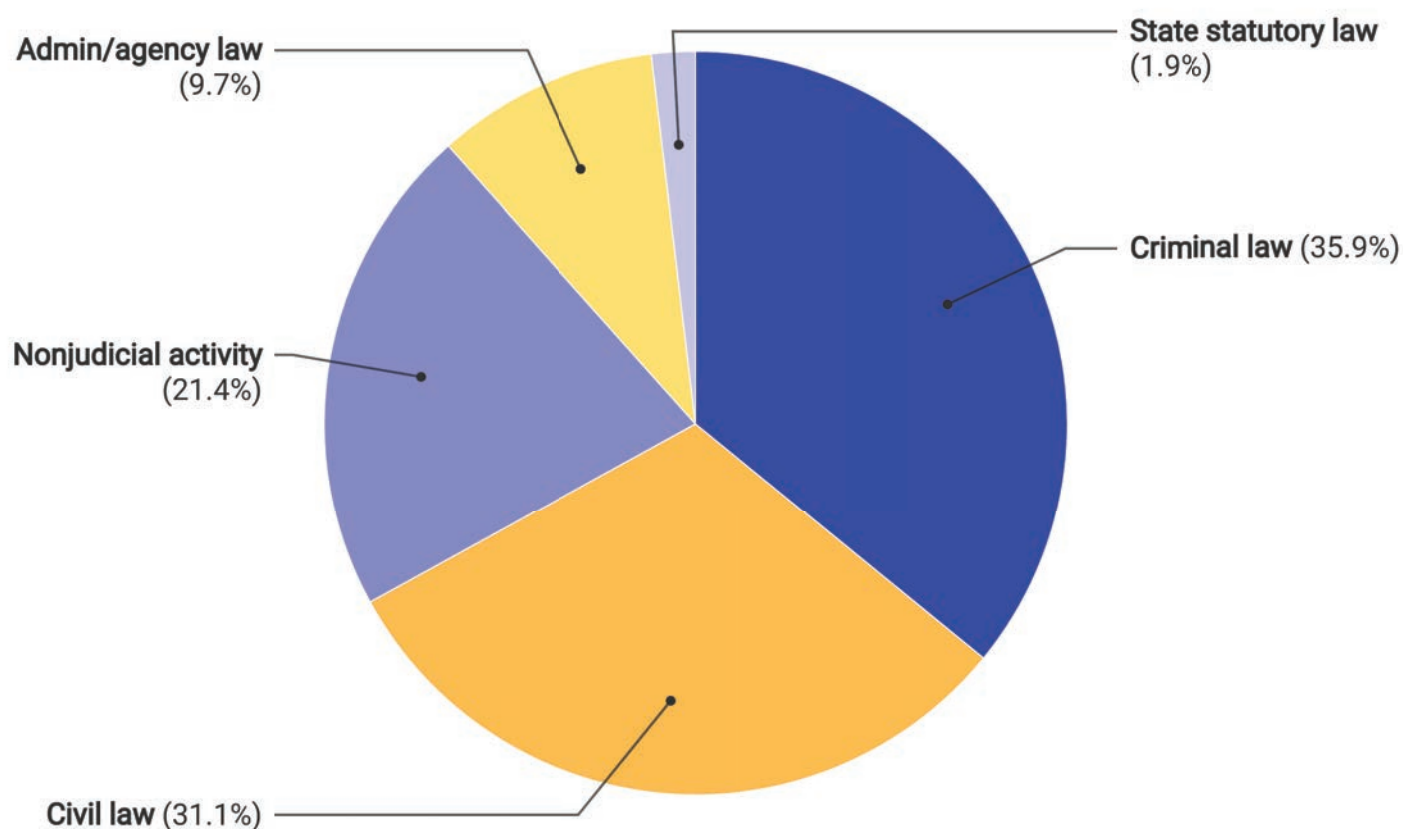
Lone dissenter

Justice Brent Appel dissented alone eight times in 2020, which was more than any other justice on the court. In our *Ballotpedia Courts: State Partisanship* study, Justice Appel recorded a Strong Democratic Confidence Score.

COURT JURISDICTION

All appeals in Iowa go first to the state supreme court, which then decides to take on the appeal or send it down to the Iowa Court of Appeals. The supreme court also has administrative and supervisory powers over the state's judiciary.

Case types decided by Iowa Supreme Court, 2020



BALLOTPEDIA

The most common case category heard by the Iowa Supreme Court in 2020 was criminal law. Of the 103 cases it heard, 37 were criminal cases, which was 35.9 percent of its total caseload for the year. A criminal case involves a final criminal appeal before the court of last resort.

The second most common cases that reached the supreme court were civil cases. A civil case is one that involves a dispute between two parties, one of whom seeks reparations or damages. The Iowa Supreme Court heard 32 civil cases in 2020, or 31.1 percent of its total caseload for the year.

The third most common cases that reached the court were nonjudicial activity cases. A case is considered nonjudicial activity if it does not involve a formal hearing and discussion before the court. The Iowa Supreme Court heard 22 nonjudicial activity cases in 2020, or 21.4 percent of its total caseload for the year.